

The Walk of the Redeemed in Christ - Part 2

TEXT: *Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous; and then thou have good success.*

(Joshua 1:7-8)

From the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation there is a clear and constant message from the Lord to the redeemed in Christ Jesus. The message is that God deems obedience to His Word to be of greater importance than any other aspect of our walk with Him. Obedience to God's Word is a primary condition that must be met in order for the redeemed in Christ to walk faithfully with God and to receive many of His promises in the Bible. Our text today reflects a message of obedience for Joshua and also for all the redeemed in Christ. God spoke clearly and directly to Joshua that He'd make him prosperous and successful only if Joshua obeyed the Lord's commands. As we know, Joshua walked obediently with God and experienced tremendous victories over Jericho and Ai. He conquered the land of Canaan and successfully led the children of Israel until his death.

Sadly though, the Bible is filled with litanies of men, women, children and nations who disobeyed God's Word and were severely punished for doing so. Quite frankly, you don't have to go beyond the first three chapters of the Bible before encountering man's first sin of rebellion against God. Adam and Eve were the first couple to introduce disobedience to the whole world when they both ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. And since their error, the seed of disobedience and the spirit of rebellion have reigned in mortals from generation to generation. Men and women (believers and unbelievers)

have undoubtedly become sons and daughters of rebellion, which God regards as equivalent to “*the sin of witchcraft*” (1 Samuel 15:23).

There is nothing God hates worse than the disobedience to His Word. Disobeying God’s Word is clearly a rebellion against God because disobedience perpetuates the desire of man to break free from God’s authority. When we disobey God’s Word, in essence we are installing ourselves as gods by telling the Almighty God that we don’t believe or trust His judgment; hence, we know better than He does. The question is, though, can the creature know better than his Creator? The truth is, whenever you choose to not obey God’s commands, you sin against Him and you are directly or indirectly doing the will of the devil. The Bible says, “*Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as [Christ] is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning*” (1 John 3:4). We cannot obey two masters – God and Satan. We must certainly choose whom we shall obey, whether God or Satan because God doesn’t share His glory with any other god. He alone is God whom we should fear, dread and obey.

Undoubtedly, in some cases when we disobey God’s commands it is due to the coldness and stubbornness of our heart towards God’s Word. Naturally, we tend to lean towards self-gratification rather than to do what pleases and glorifies God. Invariably we justify our disobedience by assuming that God understands how humanly frail we are. We forget that the application of “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Philippians 4:13) includes the empowerment by the Holy Spirit in us to walk obediently with the Lord.

Many of us pay lip service to how much we love the Lord but the very vital element of our being (our heart) that God wants is so far away from Him. The heart is the seat of all pure love and Jesus says, “*If ye love me [with all your heart], keep my commandment*” (John 14:15). Pause for a minute and meditate on this verse. It is a very simple statement but it speaks volumes

regarding our walk or relationship with Christ. Truly, if we really love Him with all our *heart, soul and might*, blatant sins of adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, drunkenness, murder, extortion and stealing would never be named among us - Christians. As it is, these sins among others are routinely committed by quite an incredible number of disobedient church members who claim to *love* Jesus. In many cases such church members try to demonstrate their *love* for Jesus by being extremely expressive (loud halleluiahs, high-fives and constant nodding to the preached Word) during a church service. It never fails that they'll get overly involved in every activity and ministry of the church. They become busybodies that attend every church function even when it is not practical for them. They worm their way into positions of authority (minister of music, usher, prayer coordinator, Sunday school teacher, youth pastor, and praise and worship leader). Nevertheless, their admirable dedication and service in the church is nothing but a facade for their double lives. We all can fool one another, but not God; "*God is not mocked*". The Bible concludes that, "*We do know that we [love] him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I [love] him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*" (1 John 2:3-4). Brethren, are you sincere about your love for the Lord? How consistent are you in obeying the Lord's commands? Can a sexually perverse church-goer truly declare and defend his love for Christ while he or she stands in direct contradiction to the word of God? Can a wife believe and trust the love and purity of her husband if he is always unfaithful to her? Think about this!

Yes, we do know that folks mired in certain deviant or sinful lifestyles do selectively obey some Scriptures, but selective obedience is not a ticket to heaven because the Bible does not approve of partial obedience. Obedience to God's Word is an all or nothing proposition. God looks for the redeemed men and women who will *walk* in a consistent and continuous obedience. The selectivity of favorite Scriptures to obey, leads to compartmentalization of sins. This is why ignorant fornicators or adulterers can make disparaging remarks

about gays, as if homosexuality is worse than fornication or adultery in the eyes of the Lord. The Bible says, *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law”* (James 2:10-11).

In God’s kingdom disobedience is disobedience just as sin is sin and it does not matter how big or small. Partial (King Saul) obedience is still disobedience and coerced (Jonah) obedience is also disobedience. As a matter of fact, delayed obedience is still considered disobedience. God desires men and women who are completely devoid of the spirit of disobedience. He strictly uses the redeemed in Christ who will tremble at His Word and do His will without being forced, begged, tricked or enticed. It was for this reason that the Lord raised up David to replace stubborn King Saul. The Bible testifies of David as the man, *after [God’s] own heart [that] shall fulfill all God’s will.*

Saul was disqualified as the king of Israel because of two counts of disobedience against the Lord. Briefly, one act of disobedience that did in Saul is found in **1Samuel 15:1-3**. It was through Prophet Samuel that the LORD sent Saul on a mission to *“go and attack the Amalekites and utterly destroy all that they have, do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox, and sheep, camels and donkey”*. God’s will and His expectation of king Saul was quite clear and simple – annihilation of the Amalekites. As we know, the battle was not Saul’s but the Lord’s. God had endued Saul with power and authority over His enemy, the Amalekites. All that was required of him was to faithfully carry out the Lord’s commands for the Lord’s glory.

But was Saul a faithful servant of the Most-High God? No! Despite the Lord’s stern instructions, Saul went and did as he pleased. He shunned God’s Word, as we all have at one point or another. He opted to lean on his own vain

understanding and deceitful heart, a move that exposed his covetous and greedy character. Saul flouted the Lord's will by being, "*unwilling to utterly destroy*" King Agag of the Amalekites and he also proceeded to keep for himself the best of the livestock and everything else that was good. Saul's disobedience exemplifies some of our attitudes today towards the Lord God. Saul showed neither fear for God nor regards for His commands. Saul's actions, and sparing the wicked King, were equivalent to a church coddling profane church member who ought to be disciplined or excommunicated.

Saul's spirit of partial disobedience afflicts a great many of us today, including teachers and preachers of the Word. Saul showed unmerited compassion for King Agag and by doing so he compromised and disobeyed God's commands. It was not Saul's place to show any mercy or compassion for the wicked King at the expense of God's sovereign judgment. Some of us compromise (disobey) and offend God in the same manner when we totally avoid presenting the confrontational side of the gospel that pierces the hearts and convicts the souls of the disobedient, hardened sinner. The true gospel message is an unavoidably confrontational message. When you avoid the confrontational side of the gospel by watering it down, you coddle sinners, keeping them bound in sins and you disobey God's command to "*Preach the Word*". "The gospel is no glad tidings to the careless sinner not convicted of sin" (Charles Finney).

Needless to say, Saul's actions made him a stench in the Lord's nostrils. Disobedience cost Saul his kingship. God took the kingship from him and gave it to another man (David) whom He knew would easily obey Him. I have often wondered had King Saul been totally obedient to the LORD would David ever have been a king. I've also wondered if Christ then, would have been Son of Saul instead of Son of David. It is just a thought. Nonetheless, the Bible consistently shows God's intolerance and rejection of his disobedient followers. Disobedience cost Moses, and a whole generation of the Israelites a trip into the Promised Land. Lot's wife became a pillar of salt because of her

disobedience. Disobedience scarred King David and his kingdom when he committed adultery and murder. Examine yourself! What price are you paying for your disobedience?

It is worth pointing out that King Saul, even though God had rejected him as the king of Israel, still ruled the people. However, he did so without God's spirit or presence. Could that be the case with you, brethren? Are you strutting around in your ministry without God's spirit or presence empowering and leading you? Is it because your gospel has no power of God behind it, that you've employed coaxing, calisthenics and theatrics at the pulpit or the altar? To be sure, if you are living in any form of disobedience you cannot invite His spirit or presence in to dwell with you. Since no one can fool or bribe God, no amount of laboring in the ministry, tithing or offering will make you right with God if you are living in sin. The Bible says, "*To obey is better than sacrifice*". God knows that obedience is the heart of all structures and governance - in the ministry, home and secular world. Without obedience, there would be chaos all over the world. Hence, God demands obedience above all else in our walk with him and He will not allow you to get away with any sort of disobedience without paying a steep price. The consequence of our disobedience is to be determined by God. He determines when, where and how to punish us which may include being sent to hell. The Bible says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (**Hebrews 10:31**). Therefore, "*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*". "*Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this the whole duty of man*". Amen and Amen.